

### **REMARKS**

Claims 1-18 are now pending in the application. Claims 12-18 have been added as new. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks contained herein.

### **INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT**

With regard to the Information Disclosure Statement addressed in the current Office Action, Applicant notes that JP 07-220742A appears to be the publication referenced. However, this publication is included in the Examiner's rejection and therefore appears to have been considered.

### **REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 AND 103**

Claims 1 and 4-5 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Puccio (U.S. Pat. No. 4,437,785). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 1 and 3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Carrell (U.S. Pat. No. 3,231,289). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 1, 2, and 4-5 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by JP 07-220742A. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 1 and 4-5 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Turley (U.S. Pat. No. 4,911,993). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 1 and 4-5 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by JP 04-196062 A. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 1, 2, 4, 6-8, and 11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Lee (U.S. Pat. No. 6,991,868). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claims 3, 9, and 10 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lee (U.S. Pat. No. 6,991,868) in view of Koch (U.S. Pat. Pub. No. 2003/0013001), DE 10028395 or JP 2001-336640A. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

At the outset, Applicant notes that claim 1 has been amended to define the apparatus relative to a fuel cell assembly. Further, Applicant notes that claims 1, 6 and 11 each now recite that the bridge region extends across flow channels in the separator plate. The Office Action cites Lee as teaching “a gasket 106 (Fig. 5) having opposed sides about a perimeter and at least one generally rigid bridge extending between sides”. Applicant respectfully submits that at best, “gasket 106” of Lee forms a perimeter for each individual cell. There is no teaching in Lee of the claimed bridge region extending between opposed sides of the perimeter seal across the reactant flow channels of an individual cell. The remaining references cited also fail to teach or render obvious these features. For at least these reasons, Applicant submits that claims 1, 6, and 11 are in condition for allowance.

Claims 2-5 depend from claim 1 and claims 7-10 depend from claim 6 and should be in condition for allowance for the reasons set forth above regarding claims 1 and 6. Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-11 are respectfully requested.

#### **NEW CLAIMS**

Claims 12-18 have been added as new and are supported by the application as originally filed. Claim 17 depends from claim 1, claim 18 depends from claim 6, and

claims 12-16 depend from claim 11 and should be in condition for allowance for the reasons set forth above.

**CONCLUSION**

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: March 24, 2009

Electronic Signature: /Ryan W. Massey/  
Ryan W. Massey, Reg. No. 38,543

HARNES, DICKEY & PIERCE, P.L.C.  
P.O. Box 828  
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48303  
(248) 641-1600

**CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS:**

**CUSTOMER NO. 29293**

Freudenberg-NOK General Partnership  
Legal Department  
47690 East Anchor Court  
Plymouth, MI 48170-2455  
Ph: (734) 354-5445 / Fax: (734) 451-1445

RWM/JMP/cmb

14272389.1